

Effective Water Utility Management for Local Officials

Water and wastewater utilities across the country are facing many common challenges, including rising costs, aging infrastructure, and population changes. Local officials, working closely with utility managers, share the important responsibility of ensuring the effective management of these water systems—not only to meet today's environmental and public health challenges, but also to protect the well-being of future generations.

What is Effective Utility Management?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and six national professional organizations that support drinking water and wastewater utilities are working together to promote a single approach to pursuing Effective Utility Management (EUM) across the entire water sector.

Based on the proven, successful practices of leading utility managers, EUM is built around the “Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities.” These Attributes provide a structured, 360-degree framework for assessing a utility's operations and tackling the areas most important to improving organization-wide performance and efficiency.

An EUM Primer has been developed by utilities for utilities. This simple-to-use, common sense guide strives to help a utility:

- Assess its operations based on the Attributes;
- Identify areas where improvements are needed; and
- Select performance measures that can help both utility managers and elected officials track progress toward sustainable utility operations.

Take Action!

Do you have a sense of your utility's priorities? Are there opportunities available for increased performance and efficiency at your community's utility? Local officials can learn the answers to these critical questions by encouraging their utility managers to take the following steps:

1. Perform an assessment of your utility operations based on the Effective Utility Management Primer to identify opportunities for improvement. The Primer and other resources can be downloaded at www.watereum.org.
2. Share results with policy makers in order to set priorities and help map out a plan for implementation.



Sustainable Water Infrastructure & Local Officials

www.watereum.org | <http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/sustain/localofficials.cfm>

The Ten Attributes of Effective Utility Management

The questions provided here, broken down by Attribute, guide local officials and utility managers in identifying priorities for improvement based on their organization's strategic objectives and the needs of their community. In order to help utilities assess their operations based on the Ten Attributes and identify possible performance measures, download a copy of the EUM Primer developed by EPA and utility managers at **www.watereum.org**.

PRODUCT QUALITY

What has been our track record at meeting regulatory requirements and the water quality needs of our community?

How can we cost-effectively improve our environmental performance, even beyond mere regulatory compliance, to better serve our community?

EMPLOYEE & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

What strategies are we employing to acquire, retain, and develop the staff of our drinking water and wastewater utilities?

How can we capture and retain institutional knowledge to cushion the blow of staff turnover?

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Do we have a long-term financial plan that ensures we can pay for needed asset renewal as well as sustainable ongoing operations?

Can we demonstrate to our ratepayers that we have implemented efficient management practices and show that their money has been well spent?

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

What strategies are in place to ensure that our utility goals are also supporting community-wide priorities and national priorities like climate change?

Can we cost-effectively do even more to reduce the environmental impact of our operation?

STAKEHOLDER UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORT

In what ways are we engaging stakeholders in our community to ensure that they have a voice in and an understanding of decisions made at our utilities?

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

How do we track the satisfaction of our drinking water and wastewater customers, and what is our track record?

OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION

What processes do we have in place to ensure that we are continually seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to increase efficiency?

Have we audited energy use and water loss of our systems and implemented strategies for improvement?
Have we been proactive with preventative maintenance to sustain our equipment and performance, and also minimize expensive emergency repairs?

OPERATIONAL RESILIENCY

Have we evaluated the vulnerabilities of our drinking water and wastewater operations?

What actions are we taking to address them?

INFRASTRUCTURE STABILITY

Do we have an Asset Management Plan for all our community's water-related assets that prioritizes investments based on risks and consequences of failure?

WATER RESOURCE ADEQUACY

Do we have a long-term water supply plan for our community?

What are we doing to promote water efficiency?

How can we improve upon our performance in this area?